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Letter dated 3 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The United States wishes to bring to the urgent attention of the Security Council the cases of seven individuals unlawfully imprisoned in Iran. Their continued detention is deplorable, and is yet another example of how Iran undermines the norms that are the foundation of the United Nations. We enclose an attached letter dated 3 December 2018 that contains more information on these cases (see annex). The United States urges all Security Council members to study the attachment, and to join us in demanding that Iran release these individuals immediately, so they can finally rejoin their families.

I request that you circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nikki R. **Haley**

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Annex to the letter dated 3 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

An open letter to world leaders, rights organizations and media outlets*

We are the families of political hostages in Iran, and we ask for your urgent action.

We come from many countries, with different backgrounds and different perspectives, but we have banded together now to come to you as one voice. We shall remain quiet no longer.

In September 2018, at a side event during the United Nations General Assembly, several of our families gathered together for the first time to share stories and struggles about getting our loved ones released. We met again a few weeks ago, this time to share our testimonies with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran. The similarities between our loved ones' cases is striking. Each story is not just a case of arbitrary detention, but deliberate and tactical moves by the Iranian authorities to secure bargaining chips.

– Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian scientist who was invited by Iranian universities to develop training for researchers, was arrested by the Ministry of Intelligence of Iran in March 2016. He was kept in solitary confinement for more than 3 months, and without any access to a lawyer for 6 months. During that time, Ahmadreza was harmed physically and tortured psychologically, and was falsely led to believe that he would be released if he made a confession as dictated by the intelligence agents. He was forced to do an interview that was later edited and aired on state television to accuse Ahmadreza of unfounded allegations. Ahmadreza has not received a fair trial since being held for 985 days, despite no evidence ever presented against him and calls by the United Nations, academics and 75 Nobel laureates for his release. After being denied medical care for over a year, after two long hunger strikes, each lasting 40 to 50 days and leaving him in a very weak physical condition, he has now been transferred to a hospital for emergency surgery. His physical state is extremely poor due to such a prolonged wait for medical attention.

– Kamran Ghaderi, father of three, Austrian-Iranian citizen and information technology consultant, was arbitrarily detained at the airport when he arrived in Tehran from Vienna for a regular business trip in January 2016. Initially, he was held in solitary confinement without charges, and after three months of isolation, torture and false promises by authorities, Kamran signed a forced confession. His lawyer only visited him for the first time for 20 minutes the day before he was given a 10-year imprisonment sentence for conducting espionage on behalf of a hostile nation. He has had no consular access. While in prison, he has had two operations in which doctors removed intervertebral discs and operated on his spinal cord. He also has a tumor on his left leg bone that has not been treated. Today is the 1,066th day of his detention.

* A copy of the present letter has been sent to government officials in the United States, Austria, Canada, Germany, Italy, Lebanon, Oman, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, to the President of the European Commission, the European Union (EU) High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, members of the European Parliament, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and to members of the United Nations Security Council.

- Siamak Namazi was arrested, tried and summarily convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of "collaborating with a hostile state", referring to the United States. He was held for over two years in exceptionally harsh conditions in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-controlled wing of Evin Prison, including in solitary confinement, while being forced to sleep on a hard floor with no mattress and being physically and psychologically tortured. He has been held for 1,145 days, since October 2015.

- Baquer Namazi is Siamak Namazi's 82-year-old father, who was also given a 10-year sentence on charges of collaborating with a hostile state. An ex-staff member of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), he has suffered from deteriorating health, and has been hospitalized seven times with various heart and other serious ailments. While out of prison on restricted medical leave, his health continues to decline. Baquer has been held for 1,015 days, since February 2016.

- Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese national and legal permanent resident of the United States, is a world-renowned Internet freedom and freedom of speech advocate. He is the Vice-Chairman of the World IT Alliance, a member of the International Telecommunication Union, and Secretary-General of IJMA3: a consortium of 19 Arab ICT associations. He was invited to Iran by the Vice-President for a women's empowerment conference. After the conference, he was kidnapped by IRGC on his way to the airport. Recently, in an AP interview, President Rouhani's Adviser admitted that Nizar's kidnapping was in no way approved by the government. Never before in recent history has a country officially invited a guest and then taken him hostage. Nizar has been held for 1,172 days, since September 2015.

- Saeed Malekpour was wrongly imprisoned in October 2008 when he travelled to Iran from Canada to say goodbye to his dying father. Saeed is currently held in Evin Prison on a life sentence. He was brutally tortured both physically and psychologically to force him to confess to a list of accusations carved out for him by IRGC. He was sentenced to death twice and kept in solitary confinement for more than three years. He lived with the fear of execution for five years, despite no evidence ever being presented against him. Saeed has not received a fair trial since being held for 3,711 days, more than 10 years.

- Robert Levinson, an American citizen, "disappeared" on Kish Island, Iran. The Iranian government has never publicly admitted to taking Bob (as his family calls him) but a televised press item initially reported he was being held by security forces and would be "freed in a matter of days". 4,287 days later, over 11 and a half years later, Bob's family has still had no contact with him. He has been held without his most basic human rights. His family has only seen a hostage video and photographs received from unnamed captors. The Iranian authorities have thwarted any attempt by the United States to investigate further, blocked due process in Iranian courts, and allude to a list of demands whenever his name is brought up.

The evidence is conclusive, and we should call this what it is: hostage taking. Since Mr. Levinson disappeared, over 50 people with some connection to a western power have been taken hostage by the Iranian authorities. According to a recent report by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, as many as 20 are still held hostage in Iran.

Over several agonizing years, our loved ones' cases have each been treated individually, but while they are all unique and complicated cases, this is not an individual problem, it is a pattern; a pattern we call on world leaders to help end. Responsible stakeholders on all sides of this issue know what to do. Please, secure our loved ones' freedom from Iranian prisons.

Our outreach now is not about international politics. We are a determined group of individuals and families speaking to our governments with one voice, as human beings who have been affected by the horrific situation that the Iranian authorities have created. We are asking for action.

We believe that the Iranian authorities have little incentive to end the cruel and horrific practice of hostage taking as a result of inadequate pressure from the international community. World leaders need to make the political cost for committing human rights violations so high that releasing our loved ones becomes advantageous to the Iranian authorities. We urge all our governments, especially those who enjoy diplomatic relations with the country of Iran, to acknowledge this hostage taking crisis immediately and to take concrete steps that would help resolve these cases and end this horrific practice.

Do what is in your power to help secure the release of our loved ones and their safe return home by ensuring that their cases are at the top of the agenda of any dialogue with the Iranian authorities. Please act urgently before any more time has passed or pain imparted.

Please clearly and immediately join with us to tell the government of Iran that this behaviour will no longer be accepted and must end now. We call on you to send our loved ones home to us.

Signed,
The families of Ahmadreza Djalali, Kamran Ghaderi, Robert Levinson, Saeed Malekpour, Baquer and Siamak Namazi and Nizar Zakka, and on behalf the many more families who remain silent in fear for the safety of their loved ones